BRIGHT HILL PROPERTIES

The Renters' Rights Act — Explained

The Renters' Rights Act is the biggest shake-up of private renting in a generation. Most of its changes took effect on 1 May 2026. Here's what has changed, what it means for you as a landlord, and the practical steps to stay on the right side of the new rules.

What's changed — at a glance

Change	What it means for you
No more fixed terms	All tenancies are now open-ended, rolling periodic tenancies.
Section 21 abolished	You can only regain possession using a valid Section 8 ground.
Annual rent increases only	One increase a year, at market rate, via a Section 13 notice.
No bidding wars	You must advertise a set rent and can't accept offers above it.
Right to request a pet	You can't unreasonably refuse; you may require pet damage cover.
No blanket bans	You can't refuse tenants simply for being on benefits or having children.
PRS Database	Landlords must register properties on the new Property Portal.
Landlord Ombudsman	Landlords must join a redress scheme for tenant complaints.

1. The end of fixed terms and Section 21

Fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies have been replaced by open-ended assured periodic tenancies that roll on until ended properly. Tenants can leave by giving two months' notice at any time. 'No-fault' Section 21 evictions are gone — to take your property back you must now use a valid statutory ground under Section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 and, if the tenant doesn't leave, obtain a possession order from the court.

2. Getting your property back

The Act keeps and strengthens the Section 8 grounds. The most relevant for landlords include:

- Selling the property, or you or a close family member moving in — these grounds can't be used in the first 12 months of a tenancy and need four months' notice.
- Serious rent arrears — generally three months' (or 13 weeks') arrears, with four weeks' notice.
- Anti-social behaviour and breaches of the tenancy — with shorter notice depending on the ground.

Good record-keeping and up-to-date compliance are now more important than ever, because possession depends on proving a valid ground.

3. Rent and rent increases

Rent can be increased once every 12 months, to the open-market rate, using the statutory Section 13 procedure with two months' notice. Tenants can refer a proposed increase to the First-tier Tribunal, which cannot set the rent higher than you proposed. 'Rental bidding' is banned — you must advertise a fixed asking rent and cannot invite or accept offers above it — and the amount of rent you can ask for in advance is limited.

4. Pets

Tenants have a strengthened right to request permission to keep a pet, and you must not unreasonably refuse. Where you do refuse, you must give your reasons in writing within the statutory timeframe. You are allowed to require the tenant to hold suitable pet insurance or otherwise cover the risk of pet damage.

5. Standards and repairs

A Decent Homes Standard is being extended to the private rented sector, and 'Awaab's Law' will introduce strict timescales for dealing with damp, mould and other serious hazards. In practice this means keeping the property in good repair and responding quickly and properly to any disrepair a tenant reports.

6. Ending discrimination

It is now unlawful to have blanket policies that refuse tenants because they receive benefits ('No DSS') or because they have children. Each application must be considered on its own merits and affordability.

7. The Database and the Ombudsman

A new Private Rented Sector Database (Property Portal) is rolling out from late 2026, and most landlords will need to register their details and properties on it. A new Landlord Ombudsman scheme, which landlords will be required to join, provides tenants with a route to resolve complaints. Failure to comply with the new system can bring civil penalties of up to £7,000, rising to £40,000 for serious or repeated breaches.

What to do now

- Treat existing tenancies as periodic and update your paperwork and processes accordingly.
- Make sure your compliance is watertight (gas, electrical, EPC, alarms, deposit, Right to Rent) — it underpins any possession claim.
- Only increase rent once a year, using a Section 13 notice; advertise a set rent rather than inviting bids.
- Put a fair, written pet policy in place and consider requiring pet damage cover.
- Review your advertising and referencing so you don't exclude benefit tenants or families.
- Watch for PRS Database registration and Ombudsman sign-up as they go live, and act promptly.

How Bright Hill Properties helps

We handle all of this for our managed landlords — periodic tenancy paperwork, compliant rent increases, pet requests, repairs within your agreed limits, and registration under the new system as it rolls out — so you can let with confidence under the new rules.